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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 OES-07 DOE-11 SOE-02 EB-08 COME-00
/097 W
----------041101 270602Z /23
R 261131Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7242
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
COMIDEASTFOR

S E C R E T ABU DHABI 0217

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PBOR TC MU
SUBJECT: SAUDI AMBASSADOR CONCERNS OVER OMAN-RAS AL KHAIMA DISPUTE

REF: A. ABU DHABI 141 B. ABU DHABI 185

1. SAUDI AMBASSADOR RUMAIH CALLED ON ME JAN 26 TO ESPRESS HIS CONCERNS ABOUT WHAT HE FEELS IS INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT PROBLEM WHICH UAE IS FACING OVER RAS AL KHAIMAH BOUNDARY DISPUTE WITH OMAN. RUMAIH SAID ISSUE HAS NOW BECOME MORE COMPLEX BECAUSE OF IRANIAN INVOLVEMENT.

2. AMBASSADOR RUMAIH SAID UAE FONMIN SUWAIDI AND OMANI FONMIN FONMIN ZAWAWI MEETING WITH UAE PRESIDENT SHAIKH ZAYID IN PAKISTAN ON JAN. 18 (REF A) HAD PRODUCED NO USEFUL RESULTS. ZAYID HAD IN
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EFFECT INDICATED THAT HE DID NOT WANT TO BE BOTHERED AT THIS POINT AND MATTER SHOULD BE RAISED DIRECTLY WITH SHAIKH SAQR, RULER OF RAS AL KHAIMAH. ZAWAWI HAD SUBSEQUENTLY TRAVELLED TO RAS AL KHAIMAH ACCOMPANED BY OMANI MININTERIOR ON JAN. 22 (REF B) SAQR HAD MADE POINT THAT HE WAS WILLING TO HAVE OUTSIDE MEDIATION (SAUDI, IRANIAN, KUWAITI) ON SETTLING BOUNDARY. OMANIS DID NOT WANT THIS. ZAWAI HAD THEN RETURNED TO MUSCAT AND MET THERE WITH

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UAE FONMIN SUWAIDI JAN 23. TOGETHER, BOTH MINISTERS HAD CALLED ON SULTAN QABUS. LATTER REPORTEDLY HAD EXPRESSED HIS GREAT IRRITATION OVER CONSTANT TOING AND FROING BY UAE AND HAD SAID THAT OMAN WOULD GIVE RAS AL KHAIMAH ONE MONTH TO STOP OFFSHORE DRILLING AND GET OUT. OTHERWISE, OMAN WOULD TAKE MATTERS INTO ITS OWN HANDS.

3. AMBASSADOR RUMAIH SAID SITUATION HAD BECOME EVEN MORE COMPLICATED BY UAE MINISTRY FOREIGN AFFAIRS RECEIPT OF A NOTE "FOUR DAYS AGO" FROM IRANIAN GOVERNMENT STATING THAT TWO OFFSHORE WELLS DRILLED BY RAS AL KHAIMAH WERE NOT IN UAE OR OMANI TERRITORIAL WATERS BUT IN IRANIAN. I POINTED OUT THAT LOCATION OF BOTH WELLS CLEARLY WERE WELL BELOW GULF MEDIAN LINE BUT THAT I DID NOT KNOW WHETHER MEDIAN LINE HAD EVER BEEN AGREED TO BETWEEN RAS AL KHAIMAH AND IRAN AS IT HAS FOR OTHER EMIRATES IN UAE.

4. RUMAIH SAID HE WAS CONCERNED OVER DOMESTIC POLITICAL IMPACT OF UNRESOLVED BORDER QUESTION AND APPARENT EFFORTS BY NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES NIBBLE AWAY AT RAS AL KHAIMAH. HE RECOGNIZED THAT IF SHAIKH SAQR DID NOT HAVE ZAYID'S SUPPORT, THERE WAS NOT MUCH SAQR COULD DO BUT AMBASSADOR COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY SULTAN QABUS WAS BEING SO OBSTINATE IN TRYING TO CLAIM WHAT PROBABLY AT MOST WOULD BE A VERY SMALL OIL PRODUCING STRUCTURE. IN RESPONSE MY QUESTION, RUMAIH SAID SAUDI ARABIA HAD NOT BEEN ASKED TO INTERCEDE SINCE IT FIRST GOT THE PARTIES TOGETHER LAST NOVEMBER WHEN ISSUE FIRST CAME TO A HEAD.

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5. COMMENT: I EXPECT MEET SHAIKH SULTAN RULER OF SHARJA AND CP HUMAID OF AJMAN JANUARY 28 AND ALSO PLAN CALL ON MINSTATE RASHID ABDALLAH UPON MY RETURN TO ABU DHABI TO SEEK CONFIRMATION THESE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AND TO SEE IF THEY SHARE AMB RUMAIH'S PESSIMISTIC EVALUATION. (SAUDI AMBASSADOR IS USUALLY VERY WELL INFORMED BUT LONG-STANDING "SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP" BETWEEN SAUDIS AND RAK COULD INFLUENCE RUMAIH'S PERSPECTIVE.) THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT IF RULERS IN UAE FEEL THEY ARE HELPLESS IN FACE OF TERRITORIAL ENCROACHMENTS BY NEIGHBORING STATES, AND THAT ABU DHABI-DOMINATED FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS NOT PREPARED GIVE THEM STRONG SUPPORT, IT WILL HAVE SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACT ON COHESION AND STABILITY.
DICKMAN

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